

To our Readers.
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The Daily Standard.

Thursday, August 24, 1871.

Royal Pensions.

There is quite an interesting discussion going on in England just now arising out of the grant of £15,600 per annum recently made to Prince Arthur on the occasion of his coming of age. The frequency of those demands upon the Parliament and people of Great Britain has given rise to an inquiry as to why the Queen of Great Britain, whose private wealth is ample sufficient to endow each and every member of her family with a fortune becoming their rank should, as each daughter takes a husband and each son comes of age, seek to make them a charge upon the public exchequer. The working men of Birmingham have recently held a public meeting to give an expression of their sentiments in relation to this matter, and the plain outspoken manner in which the various speakers entered their protest against the system has given rise to much newspaper comment and no small share of discussion in political circles throughout the country. The evil, if it really be such, is a growing one, and promises to obtain a magnitude ere long, unless a check be put upon it, that will fall with crushing weight upon the already hard-worked and over-taxed laboring classes, whose utmost energies combined with the most stringent economy are required to make ends meet and steer clear of the workhouse when old age disqualifies them for further laborious efforts. Not only the Queen's family but that of the Prince of Wales, which promises to be quite as numerous as that of his illustrious mother, will in the due order of events have equal claims upon the public purse, and in view of this fact it is not so surprising that people look forward to the future with a feeling of anything but satisfaction. The protestants against this system say that there are many ways in which the public revenues could be applied that have infinitely stronger claims to recognition. They point to the tens of thousands of homeless half-starved men, women and children who throng the cities, unable to obtain a day's employment, a burden upon society, a reproach to the nation—hordes of barbarians growing up in the centres of civilization—who, if transplanted to the colonies, where population is in demand and a wide field is open to all who choose to enter, would soon be transformed from a state of pauperism to one of independence, and instead of being a public burden would add to the national strength, increase its commerce, and extend the blessings of Christian civilization over lands whose forests and prairies are at present untraversed by the foot of man. Surely, they say, these starving thousands demand the care and sympathy of the rulers of the nation, and yet every appeal on their behalf is met with cool indifference if not with a flat denial. One of the speakers at the Birmingham meeting placed the matter before his hearers in the following pointed manner. He said: "Supposing any working man had a son, and he went to the Poor-law guardians, and asked for so much a week as long as he lived, the guardians would say, 'Who is your father? Where do you come from?' 'Where do you belong to?' It was quite right that such inquiries should be made, and when another person went before the House of Commons and asked for an annuity of £15,000 it was right for the House of Commons to make similar inquiries, and ask, 'Who are you, Prince Arthur?' 'Who do you belong to?' 'Who is your father and who is your mother?' This inquisitive style of argument brought the subject within the comprehension of every hearer, and elicited loud applause. To lavish wealth upon the already wealthy, while to the cry of famishing millions no response is heard save that the poor-house doors are open and that they may enter if they please, is a line of policy that does not meet the approbation of those whose utilitarian propensities are at war with what they conceive to be a reckless squandering of the public revenue, and whose sympathies in behalf of suffering humanity prompt them to seek in a well defined system of emigration a remedy for the increasing pauperism and misery which prevails throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles. There are not wanting, however, those who approve the principle of making provision for the members of the Royal Family by grants from the public purse on the ground that Royalty is a representative institution, and that the pomp and dignity which befits a great nation like England is concentrated in the Sovereign, and that the cost of this pomp and dignity should fall upon the nation and not upon the Sovereign or the Sovereign's family. A contemporary, while taking this view of the subject, closes a somewhat lengthy but temperately written article with the following allusion to the conduct of the Queen in declining to take that share in the public administration of national affairs which it is her duty to do as Sovereign of the realm: 'A nation which pensions all the members of the reigning House in order that the head of that House shall be free to spend his income in the discharge of representative duties has some reason to fine fault when the pensions are regularly drawn and the representative duties left unperformed. If this neglect were the unavoidable accompaniment of private grief or personal ill-health, no one would utter a word of complaint. But it so happens, as we pointed out the other day, that the duties in question can be equally well performed by deputy. It

the Prince of Wales lived at Buckingham Palace and spent on the Queen's behalf the money which she formerly spent on her own behalf, Royalty would once more be fulfilling its appointed functions. If this course had been taken when it was first ascertained that her Majesty was not going to re-enter public life, a mischievous agitation might have been altogether prevented. If it is taken now, it may not yet be too late to prevent that agitation assuming still larger proportions."

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which has been kindly tendered for the occasion, will

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EDWIN JOHN-ON,

Hon. Secretary.

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